

# Hurricane Preparedness for People with Disabilities Takes Time, Thought

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**Release Date: May 14, 2018**

**GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico** – For the child or adult facing challenges because of a disability, planning ahead for hurricane season takes added time and thought.

Planning may mean stocking up on hearing-aid batteries or keeping an emergency supply kit in a walker or wheelchair. For a child or person with autism, it may mean packing a computer game or headphones to help ease stress. It could mean showing others how to operate a wheelchair.

Caregivers play a critical role in hurricane preparedness for those with disabilities.

Here are some tips to help everyone prepare:

## General tips

- Talk with friends, family or a support network about how to stay in touch.
- Keep phone numbers for doctors, aides and family in a sealed waterproof bag.
- Pack eyeglasses, contact lenses, hearing aids and dentures in an emergency kit.
- Ask neighbors or someone in your support circle to help keep you informed.
- Plan ahead for accessible transportation in case evacuation becomes necessary.
- Identify the closest shelter in case you need to leave your house.
- Identify which medical facilities are close to your house or shelter.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets with information about healthcare needs.
- Plan and practice for an evacuation, and remember to take your medical devices in a waterproof bag.
- Have at least a 10-day supply of prescription medicines along with copies of prescriptions; list of all medications and dosage; list of allergies; list of dietary restrictions.
- Make plans for a pet, including a note for emergency responders: I have a service animal named \_\_\_\_\_, who must evacuate with me.



## **Tips for people who are deaf or hard of hearing**

- Get a weather radio with text display and a flashing alert.
- Stock up on extra hearing-aid batteries and protect them with a plastic bag.
- Carry pen and paper to help communicate with someone who does not know sign language.
- Have access to TTY and/or VRS.

## **■ Tips for people who are blind or have low vision**

- Carry a picture of your family members to help connect you with them in an emergency.
- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print. Keep a list of emergency supplies on a portable flash drive or make an audio file and keep it in a plastic bag and where it's easy to find.
- Keep a Braille or deaf-blind communications device in an emergency supply kit.
- Practice your evacuation route and be comfortable getting to your family's meeting point.

## **Tips for people with a mobility disability**

- Make sure all assistive devices that depend on electricity or batteries are working and keep your batteries in a waterproof bag.
- Keep an emergency supply kit in a backpack attached to your walker, wheelchair or scooter.
- Show others how to operate your motorized wheelchair, and have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup.
- Keep an extra cane or walker for emergencies.
- Keep an extra seat cushion to protect your skin or maintain your balance, and take it along if evacuation becomes necessary.

## **Tips for children and adults with autism**

- Familiar items will help children adjust to new surroundings and ease the stress of the transition. Remember to pack their favorite toys, movies and computer games.



- Headphones or earplugs can dampen the noise in unfamiliar settings. Consider bringing duct tape to mark the perimeters of your family's assigned space in a communal shelter.
- Children with autism often wander away. Work with teachers, police and community members as you develop safety plans to help protect children from dangerous situations.

### Tips for people with a mental health condition

- The stress that comes with an emergency can be hard to manage. Be ready to provide important information specific to your situation, or write it down and keep it with you. For example: "I have a mental health condition and may become confused in an emergency. Please help me find a quiet place. I will be okay shortly."

The range of needs runs wide and effective planning runs deep. Be ready for the hurricane season and help those who may need neighborly assistance.

For more information and hurricane season preparedness, visit [fema.gov/disaster/4339](https://fema.gov/disaster/4339).

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